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October 12, 2015



## A Note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman:

Across Iowa, residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, along with family members, long-term care ombudsmen, citizen advocates, facility staff and others, will celebrate the individual rights of long-term care residents this October during Residents' Rights Month.

The annual event is sponsored by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (The Consumer Voice) to celebrate and focus on awareness of dignity, respect and the value of long-term care residents. This year's theme - "CARE Matters" - is designed to highlight the importance of quality care and its impact on the health, happiness and overall well-being of residents living in long-term care facilities.



In keeping with that theme, the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman has decided to produce four short versions of The Advocate this month that focus on topics related to residents' rights that begin with the letters C, A, R and E. These special issues will be emailed each Monday in October and will hopefully provide you with an interesting discussion topic for your weekly staff meeting, spark an idea for a Residents' Rights Month activity or just make you stop and reflect for a moment on the crucial role you play in enhancing the quality of life for all the residents you serve.

Enjoy!

Deanna Clingan-Fischer, JD

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## "A" is for Access

Residents' Rights month is an ideal time to reflect on the quality of life your long-term care facility provides for the residents or tenants it serves. Identifying areas where your facility excels and places where there is room for improvement is the first step in ensuring you are delivering the best care possible, but you don't need to wait for a state survey to assess how you're doing.



One of the easiest, most efficient ways of determining whether your facility is meeting the need of its residents and tenants is to ask them directly. As with any business, consumer feedback can provide insights and reveal concerns that might otherwise escape the notice of the service provider. But because long-term care facilities are responsible for the overall well-being of their residents or tenants, it becomes especially important to give those individuals a voice when it comes to assessing their care.

An inexpensive way to do this is to utilize the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys jointly developed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). These instruments are in the public domain and multiple versions are available to meet a nursing facility's needs when it comes to improving quality of care and consumer satisfaction:

- The [Long-Stay Resident Survey](#) is an in-person structured interview for residents who have resided in the facility for more than 100 days.
- The [Discharged Resident Survey](#) is a mail questionnaire for residents who have been recently discharged after a short stay (no more than 100 days).
- The [Family Member Survey](#) is a mail questionnaire for family members of long-term residents to gather information about their (not the resident's) experiences with the

facility.

Information about the development of these tools, as well as instructions for how to analyze the results and guidance on reporting survey results, is available under the CAHPS section of the AHRQ page on the U.S. Department of Human Services' website: <https://cahps.ahrq.gov/index.html>.

If your facility has not already implemented a regular resident/tenant satisfaction survey, October might be the perfect time to start. And while some may think the most important mark of excellence to come out of the survey is a high overall satisfaction rating, most residents and their families might argue that the most significant role your assessment plays is allowing them to provide feedback on the long-term care issues that matter most to them.

For more information about implementing a voluntary assessment program, contact your Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman at (866) 236-1430.

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## Upcoming Events & Learning Opportunities

The Call for Sessions for the 2016 Governor's Conference on Aging and Disabilities is now open! If you have a proposal that demonstrates innovative and effective methods of engaging with the aging and disability communities, we want to hear from you! Selected individuals will be invited to present at the Governor's Conference on Aging and Disabilities at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines on May 23-26, 2016.

This conference, sponsored by the Iowa Department on Aging and the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council and powered by the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD), will highlight the myriad ways Iowa's aging and disability communities are evolving and invite participants to engage in a thoughtful dialogue about the positive impacts of a society committed to independent living. Hurry - the Call for Sessions closes Nov. 9!

> [Learn more](#)

The mission of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care by investigating complaints, seeking resolutions to problems and providing advocacy, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested.